

# **POLICY SUMMARY (OR FAQ)**



## **for Consumers of the Vocational Rehabilitation(VR) Program**

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This material is available in other formats. Please contact your local RSA office.**

This material has been developed for use by consumers and others interested in the VR program. It is taken from, and based on, information in the RSA Policy Handbook. Although this material is intended to accurately represent those policies, the RSA Policy Handbook is to be used if there is any unintended difference or question of interpretation of this material.

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# INTRODUCTION



## **THE PURPOSE OF THIS POLICY SUMMARY (FAQ)**

The purpose of this Policy Summary (FAQ) is to serve as a consumer handbook. It is intended to fulfill the promise in the Rehabilitation Act that *“Individuals who are applicants ...or eligible ...(be) active and full partners in the vocational rehabilitation process, making meaningful and informed choices--(i) during assessments for determining eligibility and vocational rehabilitation needs; and (ii) in the selection of employment outcomes..., the services needed..., the entities providing such services, and the methods used to secure such services.”*

The only way that you, the consumer, can be an active partner and make informed choices is to have the necessary tools. It is hoped that this Policy Summary(FAQ) is one such tool. This handbook should help you to know what you need:

- ★ When applying for Vocational Rehabilitation (VR);
- ★ When developing an individualized plan for employment (IPE);
- ★ When selecting services and participating in a program;
- ★ When employed and planning to exit the VR program.

It is hoped that the Policy Summary (FAQ) will be a tool for both you and your counselor. It is also hoped that it can help to educate referral sources and providers about the VR program.

## **WHAT THIS POLICY SUMMARY IS NOT**

This Policy Summary (FAQ) only represents one tool for you to be an “active participant, making informed choices”. For example, information not provided in this Policy Summary includes:

- ★ Information about of service providers;
- ★ Information about services.

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## **RSA MANAGES SEVERAL PROGRAMS. HOW DO I KNOW WHETHER I SHOULD APPLY FOR THE VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION OR THE INDEPENDENT LIVING REHABILITATION SERVICES (ILRS) PROGRAM?**

What distinguishes the two programs are not the services that they offer, or even the approach to services, but rather the goal that you want to pursue.

### **Vocational Rehabilitation**

If you want to want to become economically self-sufficient through work, the Vocational Rehabilitation program is the right program for you, regardless of how many services you need to achieve that goal.

### **Independent Living Rehabilitation Program**

If you are **not** ready to think about meaningful and gainful work but want to become more independent in some major life activity, for example:

- ★ to live in a more independent setting by moving from a nursing home or from the home of parents/relatives;
  - ★ to be more independent in getting around by using the bus, driving you car, or even within your own home;
  - ★ to take care of your own personal self-care and self-management needs;
  - ★ to manage household tasks yourself;
  - ★ to learn to communicate without assistance;
- the ILRS Program is the right program for you.

**Can I receive services from both the Independent Living Rehabilitation Services (ILRS) and Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) programs at the same time?**

No!

A full range of services is provided in either program. Services available in either program are provided to achieve a specific, pre-identified goal. The goal for the VR program is employment. Any other goal which increases your level of independence is an ILRS program goal.

Although you don't need to be in both programs to receive any needed service, you can, and should, progress from the ILRS program to the VR Program if you decide that, after achieving your independent living goal, you can go to work.

### **How does a transfer from/to either Program work?**

You may have started services through RSA's ILRS program with a goal of living more independently. After achieving that goal, you find out that you really could go to work. You should at that point ask for a transfer to the Vocational Rehabilitation program.

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In reverse, you may have started services through RSA's VR program with a goal of going to work. In the course of planning a program of services (or after having received VR services) it may become clear to you that you cannot or should not go to work. You should at that point ask for a transfer to the ILRS Program to help you achieve a more limited goal of becoming more independent.

The job for RSA staff is to make such transfers "seamless".

**What is meant by a "seamless" transfer?**

A "seamless" transfer means that the VR counselor (or ILRS counselor) does all of the paperwork "behind the scene" and in a way that the transfer has minimal impact on you and does not cause an interruption in your services.

For example, there is not really a way to transfer you from one program to the other. A new application has to be recorded, a new eligibility statement written, a new plan put in place while you continue with the existing plan and services.

Seamless transfer means that: since the agency already has all of your basic information, the counselor should not have to bother you with a lot of this paperwork. The counselor should try to do this paperwork early enough and quickly enough that you don't have an interruption of services while the switch is being made.

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# **INTAKE**



## **Policies, Procedures, And General Information**

(that consumers should know considering VR  
and when applying for VR services)

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## WHAT IS THE GOAL OF THE VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION PROGRAM?

The Vocational Rehabilitation program (VR) helps people with disabilities prepare for, get, or keep meaningful jobs.

The Arizona VR Program uses this definition: “The goal of the VR program is to help eligible individuals become as economically independent as possible and to lessen or eliminate their need for government support programs and services through meaningful and sustained work.”

In addition to helping people with disabilities get or keep a job, Vocational Rehabilitation program staff, in partnership with the Governor’s State Rehabilitation Council, also:

- ★ Work with employers to create job opportunities for individuals with disabilities;
- ★ Work with policy makers to get more resources and services for persons with disabilities who want to go to work and stay employed;
- ★ Provide information and referral services (includes use of community information and referral services);
- ★ Act as a link to employment and training resources available through Arizona’s One Stop service centers;
- ★ Establish, improve, and expand community rehabilitation programs to better serve you (individuals served by the VR program);

Local VR staff also provide consultation to staff of other programs who are partners in the rehabilitation process (for example: to mental health clinic staff, high schools, juvenile correction/probation staff, JOBS staff, disability determination services, etc.).

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## **WILL THE VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION PROGRAM HELP ME?**

**“Yes”!**

The Rehabilitation Services Administration, which administers the Vocational Rehabilitation Program, promises you (and every other person with a disability who contacts an RSA office) will always receive some assistance.

**At a minimum, what services can I expect to get?**

All individuals can expect to receive:

- ★ Information about the programs and services offered by RSA. These include:
  - The Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) program;
  - The Comprehensive Services for Independent Living (CSIL) program;
  - Specialized programs for individuals who are blind/visually impaired:
    - i) Sight Conservation services,
    - ii) Arizona Industries for the Blind (AIB),
    - iii) Business Enterprises Program (BEP),
    - iv) Rehabilitation Instructional Services (RIS).
- ★ Information and referral about other programs which assist people with disabilities, especially about the Centers for Independent Living (CIL);
- ★ Information about the Client Assistance Program (CAP). This program has people who can represent you or act as your advocate;
- ★ Help with applying for RSA program services.

**As an applicant for the VR Program, what assistance can I expect to get?**

VR staff will help you:

- ★ In deciding if the Vocational Rehabilitation program is the right program for you;
- ★ In developing an individualized plan for employment (IPE);
- ★ In providing you the goods and services that you and your counselor have both agreed on in the approved individualized plan for employment (IPE).

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## WHAT MAKES A PERSON ELIGIBLE FOR THE VR PROGRAM?

NOTE: It is important to know that being eligible does not entitle you to any specific service, or set of services. Being eligible does entitle you to a full assessment of your needs and making plans for how you can go to work. The specific services you are eligible to receive are decided during this planning process.

### Four elements:

The following four elements are all considered together to make an eligibility decision:

- ★ Do you have a physical or mental impairment that makes it hard for you to get or keep a job? and
- ★ Are you unemployed and do you want, or able, to go to work with help? or
- ★ Are you employed, and could remain employed, but only by changing jobs or protecting a job you currently have? and
- ★ Do you need help from VR?

### What do the words “work”, “job”, and “employment” mean in the VR Program?

The RSA defines the goal of the Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) Program: “to help eligible individuals become as economically independent as possible and to lessen or eliminate their need for government support programs and services, through meaningful and sustained work.”

Meaningful employment means (according to the federal law) “entering or retaining full-time or, if appropriate, part-time competitive employment in the integrated labor market to the greatest extent practicable; supported employment; or any other type of employment that is consistent with an individual's strengths, resources, priorities, concerns, abilities, capabilities, interests, and informed choice”.

### Can everyone apply and have eligibility for VR decided?

Anyone who has a disability, who believes that the impairments caused by the disability make it hard to get or keep a job, and who needs VR assistance to work can apply and request an eligibility decision from the VR program.

The only exception is that if a decision was made within the last twelve months

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that you did not have a qualifying disability, that you did not need VR services, or that your disability was too severe or too unstable for you to benefit from VR services and go to work, you will have to wait twelve months for a new decision. This does not apply if there is an obvious reason to rethink that decision before the twelve months are over.

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## **ARE THERE ANY SITUATIONS WHERE I MAY NOT BE ABLE TO START A SERVICE PROGRAM EVEN IF I AM ELIGIBLE?**

Yes! There are several situations when this could happen such as an Order of Selection or the need for extended Employment Support Services (ESS).

### **What is an Order of Selection? How might it affect me?**

- ★ If there are not enough resources to serve everyone, RSA is required to prioritize which eligible clients receive services. RSA has a priority system in place now. Your counselor will advise you regarding the priority category in which you have been placed and whether or not you will receive services.
- ★ The order of selection prioritizes individuals with the most significant disabilities first, with significant disabilities second, and everyone else third. The counselor determines your placement in one of these groups. This decision is based on:
  - the number of major life areas impacted by your disability;
  - the number and kind of services you require in order to be able to work;
  - the length of time needed to complete the necessary services.

### **Availability of resources after VR services:**

You may need extended supports (ESS), like a job coach, after you are successfully working. Such supports cost money. VR program monies cannot be used to pay for these ongoing supports. If you or your family cannot pay for them and if there are no other ongoing sources of money to pay for them, the VR counselor cannot start a VR program of services. Until resources are (or become) available to support you in employment, there is no reason to begin a VR program of services.

- ★ Sometimes an eligible individual requires goods or services which do not exist or are not available. Again, until resources which are essential for vocational success are (or become) available, there is no reason to begin a VR program of services.

### **Other reasons for not starting on an individualized plan for employment (IPE).**

Other reasons for not immediately implementing a vocational plan could be:

- ★ You need to take care of medical or other disability issues before a program of



services can begin

- ★ You need to complete high school or be in your final semester of high school before you can receive services from the VR program
- ★ Other life issues make it difficult to get going
- ★ Ordinary delays such as staff turnover/vacancies, unavailable community resources and administrative delays may occur

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## CAN I WORK AND STILL RECEIVE VR SERVICES?

Yes!

**How does being employed when applying for VR services affect eligibility?**

The mere fact that you are employed does not automatically disqualify you from services. Whether you are working or not, every applicant must meet the criteria for being eligible for VR.

Ways in which a person who is employed may be eligible include:

- ★ You are in danger of losing your job for a disability related reason and VR services can make a difference;
- ★ The job you currently have is clearly below your abilities (you are capable of more), your disability is what has held you back, and you need VR services to overcome the impairments caused by your disability;
- ★ The job you have is clearly inappropriate for someone with your disability.
- ★ Your disability is getting worse and you will have to prepare for other work.

**How might being employed affect the services you receive?**

Being employed when you apply for services (or getting a job after you have applied) can make a difference with your program as follows:

- ★ Wages increase family income. The amount of your income determines whether you have “economic need”. Some services are not available if income is above established “economic need” levels;
- ★ You have to be available to receive the services necessary to accomplish your goals. If your program involves going to school, your job should not interfere with your ability to successfully complete your IPE services.

**What happens if you get a job after becoming a VR client?**

If you get a job after you apply for VR, you and the counselor need to decide whether that job is the job you want - is **the right job** for you. If it is, you are not necessarily disqualified from services - it might just change what services and supports you need. A change in your individualized plan for employment may be needed.

### **Do I have to report employment?**

It is very important that you tell the counselor what jobs you have when you start the VR program and any changes in your job status while you are a client of the VR Program.

The experience you get from your job can be very important for you to find out what you can do and like to do. Instead of hiding the fact that you are working, make it a part of the process.

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## WHAT SERVICES ARE PROVIDED BY THE VR PROGRAM?

Different services are available to you in different phases of the VR process:

- ★ Services that may be necessary during the application and eligibility process include medical examinations, transportation to appointments, etc.
- ★ During the planning of an individualized plan for employment (IPE), services such as vocational evaluations, work experiences, assistive technology assessments, transportation to get to appointments, etc. are available.
- ★ Once you have selected a job goal there are a wide variety of services that may help you obtain that job goal. Any IPE service that is provided for you must help in moving you toward achieving your job goal. You will probably have several discussions with your counselor before the two of you decide which services will lead you to your job goal.
- ★ After services are completed and you have found a job, VR can provide services to make the job fit for you and to help you keep that job with some follow-along (and limited services after VR closure). The VR counselor can work with both you and the employer to evaluate the job and to make necessary adaptations.

**How does “informed choice” relate to the services I will receive?**

“Informed choice” means that you are responsible for, and have control over, your own rehabilitation. You must be a full and active partner in your own rehabilitation. Being a partner means:

- ★ Taking responsibility for learning about and understanding the goals of the VR program, program requirements, options, and the variety of services that are available to you to help you achieve your specific job goal.
- ★ Discussing fully and openly the problems you face because of your disability.
- ★ Agreeing on the nature of your relationship, being willing to discuss and negotiate differences, and adhering to a Code of Conduct.
- ★ Discussing the various options of goals, objectives, and services which will best help you to achieve your job goal.
- ★ Selecting the services or goods which are necessary to achieve your job goal, and who will provide them within the policies and guidelines set for the

Program.

**What are some of the services that may be available to me?**

Decisions about what services you receive will be very individualized. You will not need all of the services that the VR program makes available. The ones you and your counselor choose will be those that you need to overcome the barriers to successful employment. The following are some of the most common services that the VR program provides and a brief description of them.

**Evaluation services:** Evaluations are provided whenever you and the counselor need them. They are often needed during the planning process to give you more information about; your ability to be successful in school; your ability to control your emotions and maintain your mental health; your medical needs; your knowledge and skills; your job interests and aptitudes; and your need for special equipment or technology to succeed in school and to get or keep meaningful and gainful work.

This information is used by you and the counselor in planning your job goal and the services or goods that you will need. These services may also be used by you to determine your progress and your need to change your program.

**Counseling services:** Counseling, at a minimum, involves a free and open exchange of information between you and your counselor. Your counselor may also act as a consultant or advisor to help you: to understand VR policies, to help you understand how to deal with your disability in relation to work issues, to select a job goal, and to select the right services and providers.

You may need more counseling than your VR counselor can provide. The VR counselor is allowed to buy extra counseling from counselors in your community. If you are eligible for counseling from other agencies, the counselor will refer you to them.

**Medical/Psychological services:** Medical or psychological services are sometimes necessary to help restore function(s) that you have lost (or to substitute for them) in order to make it possible for you to prepare for, get, or keep a job.

**Personal And Social Adjustment services:** These services help you to learn how to live with a disabling condition, to learn ways to do daily tasks to live

independently or to work, and to learn how to use special equipment and technology.

**Skill Training or Educational services:** There are times when achieving your job goal is not possible with the skills or education that you have. You might need more training to successfully build on your past work experience or you might need training to change your occupation altogether because of your disability.

**Employment Based Training:** Some people need training in an actual work setting or in a place that is similar to a workplace. Supervisors or trainers work with you directly to: learn how to always be on time, keep timesheets, follow directions, meet deadlines and learn to handle the demands of a work place.

Sometimes employment based training is to develop specific work skills or as an introduction to a job.

**Job Development & Placement services:** VR staff, or community providers, can work with you to prepare a resume, to practice interviewing skills, to teach you where to look for a job, to teach you how to get an interview. If you already have these skills, you may still need help in finding a job. You also may need someone to develop a special job to match your specific needs.

**Rehabilitation Technology goods or services:** Special equipment or services (such as special tools, special workstations, special methods of doing your work, or specialized computer programs) may be necessary for you to successfully complete a training program or to perform your job duties.

You may also need engineers to modify your work station or trainers to help you learn how to use specialized equipment. Once you have a job offer, you may also need to modify your vehicle to help you get to work.

**Employment Related Goods.** Sometimes you need work tools or equipment that the employer does not provide in order to go to work. VR may be able to help with these as well as with obtaining licenses, uniforms, or insurance.

**Support Services:** In order to help you to participate in planning or while receiving services, you may need help with transportation and transportation related costs, extra food/shelter costs while away from home, and other services that you need.

You may also need assistance with your personal care. The VR counselor may help you in finding and paying for personal assistant if it is necessary.

Other services provided during planning and training include: interpreter services for the deaf, reader services, note-taking services, foreign language interpreting and child care services.

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## **WILL I HAVE THE SAME OPPORTUNITIES AS ALL OTHER CLIENTS OF THE VR PROGRAM?**

Yes and no!

The VR Program is challenged by law to provide equal opportunities to all eligible clients to the extent that it can.

The VR Program does not control what is, or is not, available to you in your community. Since your program of services relies to a large extent to what is available in the community, there will be differences in the opportunities you have depending on where you live.

When opportunities exist, you will have the same access to these opportunities than other individuals. This does not mean that you will receive the same services.

The plan of services is called an “Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE)” because the VR program recognizes:

- ★ That each consumer is different;  
(Each consumer has unique problems, different financial resources available, different goals, different support structures, different capacities, different interests, etc. )
- ★ That each VR counselor is different;  
(Each counselor brings to the process his/her own creativity and resources. Counselor’s have different backgrounds, different skills, etc.)

All counselors and all clients work from the same VR Policy Handbook. The blend of skills, information, needs, resources, etc. that each individual counselor and you (the individual client) bring to the process results in the “Individualized Plan for Employment”. How well the relationship between the two of you works and how good the information that both of you use makes all the difference.

The VR program is not an “entitlement” program. This means that there are no automatic decisions that apply to all consumers based on a set of rules. Instead, the VR program is a “discretionary” program which means not only that States have the discretion to operate a VR program but also that decisions that are made are the results of the interaction and judgments of the people involved.



Finally, services and goods are packaged in a lot of different ways. The packaging, or the names on the packages, do not necessarily mean differences in opportunities or benefits for you. It's the benefits that are provided which is important. To the extent possible, the VR program wants the benefits and the opportunities available to you to be the same – not necessarily the package.

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## HOW DO I APPLY FOR VR SERVICES?

Any one who lives in the State of Arizona and feels he/she has a disability which causes problems getting or keeping a good job can apply for Vocational Rehabilitation Services.

You can apply for the Vocational Rehabilitation program by completing a Data Collection and Application for the VR Program form, signing it, and submitting it to an Agency representative.

### What Information do I need to provide when I apply:

Along with an application, the agency collects the following personal information:

- ★ Name,
- ★ Social Security Number,
- ★ Address,
- ★ Telephone number (if available),
- ★ What your disability is,
  - Any medical/psychological information that you can provide the counselor at the time of application will be very helpful in making an eligibility decision.
- ★ Who told you about VR,
- ★ Current or recent employment information,
  - If you have a work history you need to bring information about the types of jobs you've had, skills required, job titles, years of employment for each job
- ★ Source(s) of income,
  - If you, or your family, receive government benefits (such as: social security disability, TANF payment, SSI, etc.) bring a copy of check receipts or award letters which show the type of payments and the amounts you are receiving
- ★ Other information needed will be your: sex, age, date of birth, marital status, and highest grade/education.

You must also be able to show documentation that tells the agency who you are (a picture identification) and that you can legally work in the United States.

- ★ This means that if you are a citizen, you need to bring positive identification such as a driver's license, voters registration, school or government issues ID card and social security card, birth certificate, etc.
- ★ If you are not a citizen, you need to bring information that documents your status and your legal right to work in the United States such as a passport, certificate of naturalization, INS employment authorization (etc.).

## **What is the process for making an application for VR Program services?**

If one of the following descriptions apply to you:

- ★ you are still in High School,
  - ★ you receive mental health services through community mental health centers,
  - ★ you receive services from the Division of Developmental Disabilities, or
  - ★ you are involved in any other program which already has a referral relationships with the Vocational Rehabilitation program,
- you are encouraged to use the referral procedures established specifically for these programs.

For example:

- ★ High school students should be referred through the IEP team or school counselor,
- ★ Clients of the Division of Developmental Disabilities should apply through the ISPP team or DDD case manager,
- ★ Individuals with serious and chronic mental illness (SMI) should apply through the mental health case manager, etc.

## **Do you have any orientation programs for the VR program?**

In order to help you decide whether or not to apply, it is recommended that you participate in an orientation to VR. These are held in the local VR offices on a regular weekly basis.

If attending one of these sessions is not possible for you, you can call the local office to make other arrangements. It is important, though, that you have an understanding of the program to help you make the decision whether to apply or not.

## **How do I know what office to contact?**

You can find information about the location of all the RSA offices, and how to contact them, on the RSA Web page [<http://www.de.state.az.us/rsa/>].

If you do not have access to the Web and do not know who to call, you can call the regional office closest to you. The staff will give you the phone number of the office in your area:

**Regions I** (includes Maricopa County)  
(602) 266-6752\*

**Region II** (includes Pima, Cochise, Graham, Greenlee and Santa Cruz Counties)  
(520) 628-6810\*

**Region III** (includes Coconino, Apache, LaPaz, Mohave, Navajo and Yavapai Counties)  
(928) 779-4147\*

**Region IV** (includes far east Valley, Gila, Pinal and Yuma Counties)  
(602) 266-6752\*

\*Telephone and TTY)

**Are there other ways to contact or refer yourself for VR services?**

You can call RSA on 1-800-563-1221, or

You can refer yourself through the Internet. You can do this by going to RSA's Web page [<http://www.de.state.az.us/rsa/>], downloading a referral form and mailing it to the offices nearest you. You can also emailing it to RSA using the email address on the Web.

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## **I AM A VR CLIENT FROM ANOTHER STATE, CAN I TRANSFER TO THE ARIZONA VR PROGRAM?**

**No!**

There are no agreements between States which make this possible. Instead of transferring, you will need to make a new application for the Arizona VR program and have eligibility established in Arizona.

Here are a few things you should know:

- ★ If you plan to move permanently to Arizona and you will need services over an extended period of time, applying for the Arizona VR program makes sense.
- ★ If you are here as a student or visitor and are currently receiving services from another State's VR program you are advised to remain a client of your home State's VR program.
  - The Arizona VR program cannot guarantee that it will make the same kind of eligibility decision or support the same kinds and level of service program provided through your home State's VR program.
  - The Arizona VR program will not do a joint plan with your home State's VR counselor. The Arizona VR counselor can provide help or technical assistance to your home State's counselor if that is necessary.
- ★ You cannot receive VR services from two States at the same time. You can apply in Arizona while you are still a client in another State and close your case in another State before Arizona VR services start. This helps you to make a smooth transition.

**NOTE:** RSA has special relationships with VR projects operated by American Indian tribes. Please check with your tribal counselor.

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## HOW LONG DOES THE VR PROCESS TAKE?

There is no time line that fits all clients of the VR program. Since every person is unique and no one's needs and aspirations are the same, everyone's progress through the VR program is different.

What follows are some considerations:

- ★ Completing the “Data Collection and Application for VR Program” fully and accurately and bringing the necessary supporting information for your first appointment will greatly speed up the process;
- ★ Making sure that the VR counselor has your current phone number and address will help your counselor keep in touch with you. Almost more important is to make sure that the counselor has the name and telephone number of someone who will always know how to get in contact with you;
- ★ The counselor is required to make an eligibility decision within 60 days from the time you apply. It could be a lot shorter than that if you provide good information and you keep in touch;
- ★ Planning your individualized plan for employment (IPE) is the most important part of the process. The more you know about the VR program and its policies the easier the process will be. You can help the process along by reading the “Owner’s Guide to Work” that will be provided to you and doing any research that the counselor asks you to do; The quicker you and the VR counselor can agree on a realistic job goal, the faster the process will be;
- ★ Take advantage of the opportunities to find out about your strengths and shortcomings, the labor market and how you fit into that, and what your opportunities are;
- ★ Paying attention to, and following through on, what you are being asked to do is very important;
- ★ The VR counselor also has a responsibility to follow through on his/her commitments. If commitments are not being met discuss your concerns with the counselor right away. If things are still not working don’t hesitate to call the supervisor and talk to him or her about your concerns;



- ★ The more open your relationship with your counselor is, the better is the chance that the process will work for you;
- ★ In all cases, take responsibility for staying in touch and making sure the VR counselor knows how to reach you. If the counselor makes contact, please respond. If you are no longer interested, tell your counselor, don't just drop out.

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## **ARE THERE STANDARDS OF BEHAVIOR?**

**Yes!**

You and your counselor can only be successful when the two of you trust each other and have a “positive relationship” which is not “hostile or damaging”.

**What are the standards for a “positive relationship”?**

The standards for a positive relationship include, but are not limited to:

- ★ respect,
- ★ honesty,
- ★ fair dealing,
- ★ openness,
- ★ flexibility,
- ★ courtesy,
- ★ personal responsibility.

**What situations does RSA consider to be “hostile or damaging”?**

The RSA considers a situation to be hostile or damaging when one or more of the following occur:

- ★ language being used is abusive or involves cursing and swearing,
- ★ threats of harm are made,
- ★ the personal life/character of either party become the issue,
- ★ the ethics and motivation of either party become the issue,
- ★ confidentiality rules are not being followed, or
- ★ any other actions happen which seriously undermine or destroy a mutually positive relationship.

**What rules does RSA have for dealing with hostile or damaging situations?**

The following instructions are given to RSA staff for dealing with hostile or damaging situations caused by a consumer.

- ★ Stop the meeting and give two options, either:
  - Re-direct or re-focus the meeting, or;
  - Terminate the meeting altogether (If the improper behavior or the offensive language does not stop);
- ★ If the meeting is terminated, the consumer is given the option to:
  - Schedule another meeting (on the condition that all parties can/will

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- adhere to the standards for a mutually positive relationship)
- If not, participants can:
  - i. Meet with the supervisor;
  - ii. Be referred to CAP;
  - iii. Be escorted out of the office.

★ If the individual has been asked to leave the office but refuses to do so, staff will do whatever is necessary for their safety and for an orderly work environment.

These actions by the counselor are not to cause embarrassment. Firm handling will help to maintain the potential for a productive working relationship with the individual in the future.

Program decisions affecting you will be placed “on-hold” until the immediate matter is resolved and you, or your representative, has decided whether to re-establish the working relationship or to take another course of action.

Decisions affecting you will never be based on retribution or punishment. Program decisions be based on existing policies and made within existing procedural guidelines. You need to know, however, that the ability to work successfully within the rules set by the program is a condition for continued eligibility.

**Can I be required to sign a statement saying that I understand these rules and will abide by them as a condition for continued services from RSA?**

Yes! Staff are encouraged to review these rules with you. If there have been problems and a reason for making such a request, you may be asked to sign a statement about adhering to these rules as a condition for further involvement by RSA

**What can you, as a consumer, do if the rules of behavior are violated by your counselor?**

As a consumer you also have a right to insist on respect from the counselor, to request to speak to a supervisor to lodge a complaint about inappropriate behavior by staff, and to ask for involvement by an advocate without negative consequences for you.

**If your counselor violates these rules of behavior you should immediately request**

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to speak with your counselor's supervisor. If this is not possible for some reason, please call the consumer representative at 1-800-563-1221

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## **WHAT INFORMATION DO I HAVE TO MAKE AVAILABLE TO THE VR COUNSELOR? WHO CAN SEE MY RECORDS? CAN I SEE MY OWN RECORDS?**

You will be given detailed instructions about what information RSA needs to collect and how that information will be used from the VR counselor.

### **Under what circumstances is my personal information released to others?**

The only reasons for sharing information about you are connected with your vocational rehabilitation program. The information that is shared is only what is required by law or what is necessary for the success of your VR program.

Information is given:

- ★ **to individuals or agencies who are going to provide services to you.** Only necessary personal information is shared. Examples include:
  - Community rehabilitation program providers
  - Partner agencies (DDD, BHS, etc.)
  - Individuals/organizations (such as doctors, psychologists, rehabilitation technology specialists, vocational evaluators, etc.) involved in doing evaluations.
- ★ **to the Disability Determination Services Administration** to determine your disability status for the Social Security Administration
- ★ **to other agencies and institutions (including school financial aid offices)** in order to find out if you are eligible for funding or services from them. The counselor shares the information with the requirement that the agency or institution does not share the information with anyone else
- ★ **to organizations, agencies, or individuals doing audits, evaluations, or research** as part of administering the VR program, or as part of research that would significantly improve the quality of life for you or for other applicants and eligible individuals
- ★ **to appropriate agencies, as required by Federal or State law or regulations**, in cases of child or elder abuse or neglect
- ★ **to investigations** in connection with law enforcement, fraud and abuse,
- ★ **in response to an order issued by a judge, magistrate, or other**

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## **authorized judicial officer**

- ★ **to law enforcement to protect others** if/when you pose a threat to the safety of yourself and others

With a separate written consent from you, staff will release personal information in the following situations:

- ★ To researchers or reporters who wish to contact you;
- ★ To register you with DES Job Service;
- ★ To your representative who requests records or case file information;
- ★ To your lawyer;
- ★ To honor subpoenas or dispositions.

### **Do I have access to the information collected by RSA?**

Except as provided below, all information in your case file will be made available to you or your representative. Exceptions are as follows:

- ★ Medical, psychological or other information that the counselor believes will be harmful to you will be shared with someone you choose.

The third party chosen by you can include: an advocate, a family member, or a qualified medical or mental health professional. If a representative has been appointed by a court to represent you, the information must be released to the court appointed representative.

- ★ Personal information that has been obtained from another agency or organization may be released only by, or under conditions established by, the other organization or agency.

You do, however, have a right to know that RSA has this information and to be told where you can go to request a copy.

- ★ There are some types of information which may never be released due to prohibitions in the law such as: Social Security information, Child/Adult Protective Services documents, and alcohol and drug abuse records.
- ★ You may request that the counselor amend the information if you believe that information in your record of service is inaccurate or misleading. The counselor has the choice to amend the information or not. In any case, your request for the amendment must be recorded in the case file.

**What information must I make available?**

You must be willing to provide the following types of information to authorized RSA staff. Your eligibility for the Vocational Rehabilitation program and receipt of IPE services depend on it. Information you need to provide includes:

- ★ Social Security number;
- ★ Other personally identifying information (address, race, age, sex, family status, etc.);
- ★ Medical, psychological, or other information necessary to determine the existence of a physical or mental impairment and the effects of this impairment on independent living or employment;
- ★ A complete, thorough, and detailed work history, including the impact of impairments on ability to perform work tasks;
- ★ Information necessary to determine your ability to work in the United States of America and its territories;
- ★ Income information (such as: proof of AHCCCS, food stamp, WIC program, SSI, TANF eligibility or your last federal income tax statement) if you want to receive any services which require a prior economic need determination;
- ★ Information about your involvement in (or eligibility for) any programs that are able to provide you services that you may need as part of a vocational rehabilitation program;
- ★ Any other information (such as criminal history, outstanding school debts, education grant history, revocation of licenses, etc.) which will impact employment and planning for employment.

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## HOW IS ELIGIBILITY DECIDED? AND WHAT CAN I EXPECT?

**What is the actual process for deciding my eligibility?**

The following steps are followed in deciding your eligibility:

- ★ You provide the counselor with information from a qualified person (for example: a licensed doctor, a certified psychologist, a licensed school counselor, a substance abuse specialist) that shows that you have a disability or you provide evidence of currently being eligible for SSI or SSDI. If you don't have that information, you will need to tell the counselor how to get such information and to authorize him in writing to do so.
- ★ The vocational rehabilitation counselor will ask you to provide additional information on a "Data Collection.." form and discuss with you:
  - What prevents you from working and why;
  - How you think the VR program can help you to get, prepare for, or keep a job;
  - Whether you want and need any of the services that the VR program can provide to help you prepare for or get/keep a job;
  - Whether you have worked successfully in the past or not and if your current disability would keep you from doing that work again.
- ★ If existing information is not enough, the VR counselor will authorize additional examinations, evaluations or tests. You will not be charged for these.
- ★ If the counselor believes that you cannot go to work, he will find work experiences to give you a chance to prove whether you can or not. If it is decided that work is really not possible or a reasonable option, the counselor will complete an ineligibility certification and record the information in the case file.
- ★ The vocational rehabilitation counselor will explain to you why you are, or are not, eligible. This explanation includes:
  - The impact of your disability on your ability to work successfully (based on available records, such as records from my school, doctors, a mental health clinic, and on discussions with you);
  - Your desire to go to work and why you believe VR assistance is necessary.

**NOTE:** If you have been made eligible for Social Security because of a disability (SSD, SSDIB, SSI), have proof of that, and you intend to go to work you are automatically eligible for VR services unless your disability is so severe as to make working impossible.

**How long should it take to make an eligibility decision?**

- ★ Once you have provided an application for vocational rehabilitation services, VR staff will tell you at least within 60 days whether or not you are eligible as long as you provide the necessary information and make yourself available to make a decision possible. If the necessary information is easily available, the length of time to make the decision will be shorter than this.
- ★ If a time extension is needed, VR staff will ask for an appointment with you. The purpose for the meeting will be to discuss the reasons why VR is unable to make an eligibility decision and to decide what needs to be done to get a decision made.
  - if you agree to an extension you will be asked to sign a "waiver".
  - if you do not agree to the extension you may ask for a review of the reasons to delay the decision by a supervisor or through an Administrative Review.

**What does being determined eligible mean for you?**

- ★ If you are eligible:
  - A decision will be made whether you fall into a priority category for receiving services. Priority status is based on the number of disability related service needs that you have (see: What is an Order of Selection?).
  - If you are both eligible and in a priority category, you can begin planning a program of services with your counselor.

You will be contacted by a counselor for an appointment. The purpose of the appointment is:

    - i) to begin assessing your needs for going to work,
    - ii) to help you determine a job goal,
    - iii) to find out what services are necessary to achieve the job goal that has been set, and
    - iv) to develop an individualized plan for employment (this plan will include: the services to be provided by the VR program, the services to be made available from other sources, and the goods and services you will be responsible for).
  - You will automatically receive:
    - i) Counseling services,
    - ii) Information about jobs and job opportunities; and
    - iii) Help in obtaining a job.

Eligibility for VR does not automatically qualify you for any other service. You must qualify separately for any services that are not listed above.

**What happens if I am determined not to be eligible?**

- ★ The counselor will tell you why you are not eligible and give you an opportunity to discuss that decision with him/her.
- ★ The counselor will provide you with the reasons in writing.
- ★ You will be provided with information regarding your right to appeal this decision. This request can be for a formal or informal review of the decision. You have the right to have a representative with you. You will be helped to find one if you don't already have someone.

**Can eligibility ever be taken away after I have been declared eligible?**

Yes, a person who was determined eligible can later become ineligible. This happens only when experiences show that an individual's ability to benefit from VR services and to go to work no longer exists.

If it becomes clear at anytime that you can no longer be reasonably expected to achieve an employment outcome (after any available and applicable assistive technology has been tried and/or used) the counselor will discuss the matter with you. It is hoped that both you and the counselor will agree when your VR case should be closed and alternatives to be pursued.

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## WHEN AND HOW IS MY VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION CASE CLOSED?

**There are four reasons why your case may be closed?**

Specifically, your case will be closed in several different circumstances:

- ★ If you are determined not to be eligible
- ★ If you request that your case be closed
- ★ If it becomes impossible to continue to work with you, because:
  - We can't find you
  - You don't respond to attempts to contact you
  - You are hospitalized, incarcerated, or otherwise not able to continue your program
- ★ If you are successfully employed and no longer need VR services and:
  - You have maintained suitable employment for at least 90 days
  - You and your counselor have agreed to the closure of your case.

**What happens if I am determined not to be eligible?**

- ★ The counselor will tell you why you are not eligible and give you an opportunity to discuss that decision with him/her.
- ★ The counselor will provide you with the reasons in writing.
- ★ You will be provided with information regarding your right to appeal this decision. This request can be for a formal or informal review of the decision. You will be told about your right to have a representative with you and will be helped to find one if you don't have someone.

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# **PLANNING**



## **Policies, Procedures and General Information**

(you should know when planning your Vocational Goal,  
intermediate objectives, and types of services)

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## **WHAT DO THE WORDS “WORK”, “JOB”, AND “EMPLOYMENT” MEAN IN THE VR PROGRAM?**

### **What is the goal of the VR Program?**

The goal of the Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) Program: “to help eligible individuals become as economically independent as possible and to lessen or eliminate their need for government support programs and services, through meaningful and sustained work.”

### **What is the definition of “meaningful work”?**

Meaningful employment means (according to the federal law) “entering or retaining full-time or, if appropriate, part-time competitive employment in the integrated labor market to the greatest extent practicable; supported employment; or any other type of employment that is consistent with an individual's strengths, resources, priorities, concerns, abilities, capabilities, interests, and informed choice”.

### **What does the definition of “meaningful work” mean for me?.**

The federal definition means that we should not pursue a job that is inconsistent with your disability or that everyone knows you won't be any good at. The definition also means that we should build to your strengths and help you to find a job that you are interested in and that takes into account your abilities, capabilities, concerns, and priorities. You and the counselor need to discuss what this means for you in your individual circumstances.

### **What is the connection between “economic independence” and the work or career I choose?**

You are eligible because your disability creates a handicap to employment which can be overcome. The vocational rehabilitation program's first option is to lessen or eliminate that barrier to employment. If you already have employment experience and skills (in jobs which meet the definition above) and the VR program can lessen or eliminate the barriers that keep you from using those skills, you are expected to go back to work using those skills and experiences. There is not an option to choose some other kind of work unless the jobs you have had are clearly not consistent with your abilities or disabilities.

### **How is “meaningful work” related to the goal of the VR Program**

The goal of the Vocational program is to help people become as economically independent as possible through work. The job or career you choose must contribute to your “economic independence” and lessen or eliminate the need for government supports. “Economic independence” means your ability to earn enough money to take care of you and your family's needs, including your own

ongoing disability related needs. The vocational goal you choose must be to achieve “economic independence” to the extent that is possible for you.

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## HOW WILL VR INVOLVEMENT OR WAGES AFFECT BENEFITS?

**My family receives TANF, are there any special rules I need to know about?**

Yes!

Arizona has strict work rules for families receiving Transitional Assistance for Needy Families (TANF). You need to know about these rules.

You, as a client of the VR program, may have benefits and services available to you through the VR program which you cannot take advantage of without risking the loss of TANF (or of being sanctioned). Although VR counselors are being trained to be aware of the pitfalls you face, it is your responsibility to know the “JOBS” requirements and to make sure that your VR plan is consistent with “JOBS” requirements.

Please know that you are not exempt from “welfare to work” JOBS requirements just because you are disabled or a client of the VR program.

**I receive SSI and/or SSDI/SSDIB, under what circumstances will I lose these benefits? How about the impact of work on AHCCCS/ALTCCS benefits?**

The rules are complicated. It is possible to work without losing medical benefits or access to affordable health insurance.

- ★ The Social Security Administration makes available a variety of work incentive programs (e.g. IRWE and PASS plans, “trial work periods”) that lessen the impact of wages on your cash benefits or on your medical benefits.
- ★ The rules for AHCCCS and ALTCCS eligibility are also complicated. SSI and AHCCCS benefits are directly linked to income levels.

It is important to discuss these issues with your counselor as well as with a Benefits Counselor to whom your counselor will refer you. There are many details and many answers to differing situations (e.g. “medical improvement expected”). Don’t assume that you know the answers to your questions. Explore all issues in detail with your local Benefits Counselor. You may discover that you can in fact work without losing access to important benefits such as health care.

**I received a “Ticket to Work” from Social Security Administration. What should I do.**

You don’t have to do anything. If you decide to try to go to work, you can take

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your Ticket to the VR agency or to any Employment Network (EN) that is identified in the packet of information you receive.

You and the VR Agency or EN will discuss your desire to go to work and what it make take to make that possible. You make the decision who you want to work with.

A signed agreement on an individualized plan for you to go to work means that you are assigning your Ticket to that VR agency or that EN.

The VR Agency or EN can use that Ticket assignment to obtain reimbursement for the costs of your rehabilitation from the federal government.

**I receive Workman's Compensation benefits, will involvement with VR impact them?**

**Yes!**

Successfully going to work will impact workman's compensation benefits which are based on "unscheduled injuries" (described in A.R.S. 23-1045) and which are affected by you being able to work. Some benefits are based on "scheduled injuries" (listed in A.R.S. 23-1065) and will not be impacted. It is important for you and your counselor to discuss your Workman's Compensation status and how your involvement with VR and going to work may be impacted.

You should also know that there is an agreement between the Industrial Commission and the VR program which allows VR to use ICA funds to pay for your rehabilitation. Work and disability information is shared between the two agencies.

**Are there other impacts of working and receiving wages that I should think about?**

**Yes!**

Other areas that may be affected by receipt of wages include: housing, food stamps and daycare services.

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## **CAN THE VR PROGRAM HELP ME TO BECOME SELF EMPLOYED?**

Maybe!

Self employment is a big step and is not for everyone. If this appears to be a possibility, the VR counselor is required to:

- ★ Thoroughly investigate this idea with you,
- ★ Involve others who are able to help you evaluate your chances for success,
- ★ Provide you with assessments, and training if necessary, in the type of work you plan to pursue
- ★ Provide you with training on how to be self-employed and what the requirements and responsibilities of being self-employed are,
- ★ Work with you to develop very specific plans on how use your skills and abilities in a self-employment setting,
- ★ Direct you to those who can help you to apply for loans and grants,
- ★ Write an Individualized Plan for Employment that lists what VR will provide to help prepare you for work and the development of a business plan (the IPE may also list the types of services that may be available through VR to support a viable self employment business plan if such is developed and approved), and
- ★ Obtain review and approval for support of a Business Plan from a Business Advisory Committee.

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## HOW DO I SOLVE PROBLEMS WITH MY COUNSELOR, OR PROBLEMS WITH DECISIONS THAT HAVE BEEN MADE?

### Can I change counselors if I don't like the one I have?

There is not a simple "yes" or "no" answer. Counselors have been given specific assignments and responsibilities. The supervisor cannot arbitrarily rearrange assignments. If there are good reasons for changing your counselor, and it is possible to make the necessary reassignments, the supervisor may be able to honor such a request.

The supervisor will likely want to review and discuss the request with you:

- ★ Good reasons that may be considered include: personality conflicts or broken relationships, and the need for specific and specialized knowledge or skills.
- ★ Supervisory options include: providing extra support to the existing counselor, mediating in a process to reestablish the relationship, or trading assignments between two counselors.

### How do I ask for a review of, or appeal, a decision that was made by my counselor? How does this work?

There are a number of formal and informal ways that you can use.

The RSA insists that you to try to work through any problems with the counselor first. Anyone at a higher level in the organization dealing with an appeal will ask you whether you have made honest efforts to work with your assigned counselor. If not, he/she will ask you to do so (unless there are serious extenuating circumstances).

If you have tried to work issues through with the counselor, the review or appeal process will work better and faster.

It is also important for you to know that you may always use a representative or advocate to help you. This applies to both formal and informal reviews and hearings. VR counselors are required to provide you information on how to get representation if you want it.

### General things you need to know

- ★ It is very important that if you disagree with a decision or lack of a decision you do something right away. **Your rights to formally appeal a decision is twenty calendar days.** You may want to try alternative ways to resolve the issue but, to protect yourself, make a formal request within the twenty days of

the event to be sure you don't lose the option for an appeal.

★ **Informal reviews:**

The options available to you include informal and formal reviews. Listed below are the informal reviews that are available to you. Use of these does not waive your right for a formal review.

**Involving the Supervisor**

It is often useful to contact the supervisor or ask your counselor to involve the supervisor. This works well if there is a question of policy interpretation or choice of options.

**Asking for an Informal Review**

An Informal Review is a review of the decision made by the counselor by another agency staff person who is not involved in the original decision that was made. The administrative review is an excellent way to get all of the facts on the table, have someone research the policies pertaining to the issues involved, and make a decision.

The results of the administrative review is a written report which: summarizes the review and the facts that were presented, analyzes the issues involved, and then makes a decision. The decision is based on the information gathered in this process.

If you don't agree with the decision you can appeal that decision to an impartial hearing officer. Doing an Informal review does not waive your right to a Formal Due Process Hearing.

**Asking for Mediation**

Mediation is a process whereby a volunteer(s) who does not work for the agency and who has been trained in the mediation process sits down with you and the counselor to see if the issue can be resolved. It is a confidential process and no record of the meeting is kept. The desired result is a mediation agreement signed both by you and the counselor. No one imposes a decision on you. The agreement that is reached, however, is subject to agency review to make sure it is consistent with law or policy.

★ **Formal Hearing**

Use of informal review processes never waives your right to a formal hearing of your appeal.

A due process hearing will be conducted by an impartial hearing officer who



does not work for Rehabilitation Services Administration. The hearing officer issues a decision based on the approved State plan, the Rehabilitation Act (including regulations implementing this Act), and State regulations and policies. The officer provides the decision in writing to the applicant or eligible individual, or, as appropriate, the applicant's representative or individual's representative, and to the RSA.

**What if I am dissatisfied with how I am treated, or if I want to complain about other aspects of the program: location of the office, etc.?**

The RSA has several ways for you to tell us how you feel about the VR Program. They include:

- ★ A client service representative  
The RSA employs a staff person in the Administrative Office to be available to answer questions and to hear your complaints. This individual can be reached by calling 1-800-563-1221.
- ★ Customer satisfaction surveying by local staff  
Local offices are surveying clients to see how satisfied they are. If you are surveyed, let them know how you feel. If you are not surveyed, call the local office supervisor or the regional RSA office to let them know how you feel.
- ★ State Rehabilitation Council  
The State Rehabilitation Council has, as one of their responsibilities, the job of finding out how consumers feel about the program and any specific complaints they may have. They conduct an annual statewide customer satisfaction survey, they hold hearings and forums around the State to get input, and make themselves available to hear from you on an individual basis. The best way to know who they are is to go to RSA's Web page and click on the "Councils" icon. This information can also be gotten from calling the RSA client service representative (see above) or the Council Executive Director at (602) 542-6291.

It is generally NOT USEFUL TO CALL THE DES DIRECTOR'S OFFICE, THE GOVERNOR'S OFFICE, OR YOUR LEGISLATOR. They all require you to use administrative remedies before they will get involved. They will usually check with RSA first to see what attempts have been made to solve the issue.

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## **IS THERE A WRITTEN RECORD OF WHAT'S BEEN DECIDED BETWEEN A CLIENT AND THE VR COUNSELOR?**

Yes!

All agreements you make with your counselor have to also be in writing.

The most important written document is your Individualized Plan for Employment or IPE.

### **What is an Individualized Plan for Employment or IPE?**

An Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE) is a summary of the program of services that you and your counselor have developed together. It includes several parts:

- ★ The actual service plan which includes:
  - Your employment goal;
  - In-between steps/objectives that have to be achieved to reach that goal;
  - Services necessary to achieve that goal, who will be responsible for paying for those services, planned dates for receiving them;
  - Your responsibilities relating to these services;
- ★ Understandings:
  - How this plan is coordinated with your school plan, plan with DDD, or your mental health plan;
  - How you plan to participate in achieving the goal;
  - How you feel about the plan and your participation in it;
  - A list of your general responsibilities;
  - Your rights, procedures for expressing and seeking remedy for any disagreement with an action (or lack of action);
- ★ Amendments (changes to your plan);
- ★ The reasons for closing your VR case:
  - No longer eligible;
  - Services finished, working successfully;
  - Services finished, services were unsuccessful in your getting/keeping a job;
  - Other.
- ★ “Post Employment Services”;

- ★ Dated Signatures by you (and/or your representative), the counselor (and sometimes a VR Supervisor).

**Are there other written statements or agreements?**

Yes! There are. Some of these can be considered addenda to your IPE. Some of them are:

- ★ Post Secondary Plan of Study for someone who is going to school;
- ★ Checklist completed when planning to modify a vehicle;
- ★ Contracts between you and the agency when you receive equipment.

NOTE: The VR program can pay only for services described in an approved IPE. VR cannot reimburse for debts you have incurred.

**What are the procedures and processes for completing an IPE?**

Clients are encouraged to write their own IPE. Even if you don't write your own IPE, you are required to actively participate in all of the steps that go into developing an IPE. At the end you will review and agree, in writing, that the written IPE was mutually developed, negotiated, and agreed on. Please do not sign the IPE if you don't understand it.

Once written, the "Individualized Plan for Employment" will be reviewed with you whenever necessary, especially at planned completion dates of Steps/ Intermediate Objectives. Reviews must be done at least once a year. These reviews are to check on your progress towards your employment goal.

Sometimes changes are necessary. These may be minor involving dates, providers or costs. Sometimes the changes are major - changes in vocational goal, intermediate objectives, client responsibilities. You should always be involved in these decisions and should receive a copy of the amended IPE when there are major changes.

You will receive a copy of the IPE for your records.

**Should I keep copies of written agreements?**

Yes! It is important to keep copies of records you are provided for various reasons:

- ★ Records are important reminders for you what has been agreed on. You should not rely only on what you think you heard. If there is not something in writing, there is not an agreement;
- ★ Dates are especially hard to remember and can easily be forgotten;

- ★ Records provide an opportunity for you to remind your counselor to do things that have been agreed on;
- ★ In cases of any dispute, it is important for you to have documentation to make your case.

It is recommended you make a file of all your VR records, check them periodically, and bring them with you to interviews.

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## HOW IS MY JOB GOAL DECIDED?

### Do I get a say in what my job goal is going to be?

Your Job Goal is a decision that you and your VR counselor agree on.

There are different things that need to be discussed and thought about before you and your counselor decide on your Job Goal. Some of these things are:

- ★ What are you interested in? What are your likes? What are your dislikes?
- ★ What are you good at doing? What are your abilities? What are some skills that you have already shown people you have?
- ★ What kind of jobs might be available for you to apply for? What kind of jobs are open in your community? If you choose a particular job goal, is it probable or likely that a job like that will be there for you to apply for?
- ★ What kind of jobs have you had in the past and what skills and training from the old job can you use in a new one?

### How do I and my counselor decide on what job goals to pursue?

The process you and your counselor will follow includes:

- ★ A review of what you have already accomplished-

A history of your education, skills and work provides a lot of information about what you are ready to bring to a job. You are expected to build on these, to the extent possible;

- ★ A review of your interests and strengths;
- ★ A review of your general health status, your disability, the limitations that the disability brings with it, and how you have managed your disability to date;
- ★ A review of the labor market, its requirements and its opportunities-
  - It does not make sense to select as an employment goal:
    - i) jobs that don't exist or don't occur very often in the local labor market unless you are willing to move;
    - ii) a job that requires unique qualities and that is available only to a person who really stands out in his/her field – unless you are that person;

- iii) a job that requires that you be licensed and you don't have a license and can't get one;
  - iv) a job that requires a bond and you are not bondable;
  - v) a job that requires a police check of your background and you have a police record that prevents you from getting that job.
- It does make sense to select:
- i) A job area that you already have skills in;
  - ii) A job that is related to jobs that you have done successfully;
  - iii) A job that builds on existing interests and on skills you have already developed and demonstrated.

**What if I hate my job and want a change? Will VR help me to do this?**

**No!**

The purpose of the VR program is to level the playing field for persons with disabilities. The VR program is not there to make career changes unless doing so is necessary for disability related issues.

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## **HOW ARE SPECIFIC GOODS/SERVICES SELECTED? AND HOW IS IT DECIDED WHO PROVIDES THEM?**

VR staff will provide or assist you in acquiring information necessary to make a choice about:

- ★ What specific goods or services are necessary;
- ★ Who are the best providers of those goods or services;
- ★ How services can best be provided.

**How do we decide who will provide the services I need?**

As part of the planning process, VR staff will provide you with information about service providers, such as:

- ★ State or regional lists of approved service providers;
- ★ Information from other consumers who have used those providers - if available;
- ★ Names of other consumers (who have given permission to give out their names) or groups with whom you may discuss the services or service providers;
- ★ Information known by RSA about service providers such as: placement rates, usage rate, available accommodations, etc.;
- ★ Qualification requirements (such as licensing, certification, accreditation, registration, etc.) set by law, policy, or regulation for planned goods/services.

**How do we decide what goods and/or services are right for me?**

As part of the planning process, VR staff will provide you with the following information about goods or services:

- ★ Which goods and/or services are best able to meet your need based on their own experience, consultant recommendations, evaluations, etc.;
- ★ What standards to look for when selecting goods/services;
- ★ What goods/services are under contract and must be purchased from contractor.

**Who makes the final choice of what goods/services to buy?**

You (the consumer), with the advice of the counselor, chose the type of goods/services you receive within the following limits:

- ★ The goods/services must be planned for and approved in an IPE;
- ★ The goods/services must be needed to achieve the goal and available through VR;
- ★ The goods/services must meet standards that have been set by contract or law, policy, or regulation.



**Who makes the final choice of who to buy goods from?**

You (the consumer), with advice from the counselor, will choose the provider you will use within the following limits:

- ★ State contractors, if they exist for the goods to be bought, must be used. When the State has contracts for the goods needed by you, only those contractors are available to be used. Exceptions must be formally requested;
- ★ If there is not a contractor, the provider must be willing to work within fee schedules or rates set by RSA;
- ★ If none of the foregoing apply, the counselor and you must follow competitive pricing principles to get the best value; Considerations include:
  - cost of the item or service,
  - your needs,
  - existence of service agreements,
  - availability of warranties,
  - cost of repairs, etc.

You, the client, may select something at a higher rate **if** the provider is willing to accept partial payment from RSA and the remainder from you and **if** the goods are not under State contracts.

**Who makes the final choice of who to buy services from?**

You (the consumer), with advice from the counselor, will choose the provider you will use within the following limits:

- ★ The provider of services must meet licensing, accreditation, certification, etc. or other standards set by law, policy, or regulation;
- ★ State contractors (if they exist for the services to be bought) must be used. When the State has contracts for the goods needed by you, only those contractors are available to be used. Exceptions must be formally requested;
- ★ When there are no State contractors, the provider must be willing to work within any maximum service rates that have been set by RSA;
- ★ If service rates have not been set, The VR counselor will normally pay published rates.

(NOTE: Also see “Will VR sponsor me for school? And what are the rules for

choosing a School?”)

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## **DO I HAVE TO PAY FOR SERVICES?**

**Is an individual's income ever a factor in what services are paid for by VR?**

Yes! Income is a factor for some services, unless you currently receive SSI or SSDI benefits.

**What services can I receive regardless of my income?**

Services which are available regardless of one's income include:

- ★ Evaluation and assessment services,
- ★ Information and referral services,
- ★ IPE planning services,
- ★ Consultation and vocational counseling provided by the VR counselor (or other VR staff),
- ★ Job development and placement services provided by the VR counselor (or other VR staff),
- ★ Tuition,
- ★ Adjustment to disability services,
- ★ Rehabilitation technology goods/services.

**What services are based on income?**

Services which are only available if an individual has economic need include:

- ★ Purchased counseling services
- ★ Medical or psychological restoration services
- ★ Books, tools, computers, software, tape recorders and other training materials purchased for education/training
- ★ Occupational licenses, tools, computers, work equipment purchased for work
- ★ Vehicle modifications
- ★ All transportation costs
- ★ All food/clothing, living away from home and relocation supports
- ★ Child care services

Once eligibility has been established and an individual plan of employment (IPE) is being discussed, your income is reviewed and your economic need status is determined.

**How is a person's income evaluated?**

- ★ You are considered to have economic need if you currently eligible to receive other government benefits or services based on financial need, such as TANF, food stamps, child care, school lunch program or if you are a ward of the Court/State.

- ★ If there is no documentation that you are currently eligible for government benefits, economic need is based on your adjusted gross income on your federal income tax statement. You must provide State or Federal income tax returns for the prior year, including proof of any changes since then.
- ★ If income tax returns are not available, you will need to provide: wage statements to include gross wages; unemployment income verification for past quarters and current unemployment income checks; statements from retirement systems, banks, insurance companies (Workers Compensation carriers), etc. to help estimate your adjusted gross income.
- ★ If you are younger than 18 years old, the income tax statement or income from individuals who are claiming you as a dependent is counted.
- ★ If you are 23 years of age or younger, the income tax statement or income from individuals claiming you as a dependent based on student status is counted.
- ★ If you are at least 18 years of age and living independently with a spouse or life partner, your spouse or partner's income tax statement or income is counted.
- ★ You must sign a statement saying that the information is accurate and complete.

**When is a person considered to have economic need?**

- ★ Unless determined by other agencies that you have economic need, a person's with an adjusted gross income below the median income level for your size family is considered to have "economic need".
- ★ The median income level for families in Arizona is published yearly in a chart and is available to you upon request.
- ★ The counselor compares your family income with the chart to decide if you have "economic need".

**Are there other factors which limit what the VR program will pay for?**

**Yes!**

Even though you personally are not responsible for the cost of a service, it does not always mean that the VR program can or will pay for the service. You may be required to use other resources that are available to you to pay for goods or services. Some examples include:

- ★ If you are eligible for a Pell Grant or other educational grants, you are required to apply for them and use them to help pay for your education;
- ★ If you have an insurance settlement that specifies what the payments are for (education, medical services, etc.), VR will not duplicate these payments;
- ★ If you are eligible for medical or psychological services through your insurance, Medicare AHCCCS, behavioral health services, etc., you must use these providers to obtain requested medical or psychological services.

NOTE: The VR program can, under some circumstances, become involved in co-payments if these alternate sources can bear some but not all the costs of the service. Please ask your counselor about this.

Other situations which may require your participation in the cost of services:

- auto repair
- private schools
- choices you make which exceed the maximum cost VR will pay

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# **SERVICES**



## **Policies, Procedures, And General Information**

(that consumers should know when planning for,  
obtaining, and receiving specific services)

This material has been developed for use by consumers and others interested in the VR program. It is taken from, and based on, information in the RSA Policy Handbook. Although this material is intended to accurately represent those policies, the RSA Policy Handbook is to be used if there is any unintended difference or question of interpretation of this material.



## **ONCE AN IPE HAS BEEN WRITTEN, CAN I GO AHEAD AND GET MY OWN SERVICES?**

**No!**

Once services have been planned, they must be specifically authorized, in writing, before they can be made available and you can use them.

**Will the VR program honor commitments I make, or liabilities I incur, based on an approved IPE?**  
**NO!**

The RSA cannot honor commitments you make on your own. State and federal laws do not allow individuals who are not working for the State (and who are not properly authorized) to obligate the State for payment of any goods or services.

### **What are the procedures for authorizing goods and services?**

There are specific procedures and rules that must be followed by the VR counselor when authorizing services. Some of these rules are:

- ★ All authorizations must be in writing. Verbal authorizations are not permitted and are not recognized by the State.
- ★ Unless goods or services are being provided during the intake or planning process, any authorization must be listed in (and consistent with) the written Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE). The IPE must have been signed and dated by you and the counselor.
- ★ Authorizations can be written only after the VR counselor has completed the process for identifying the right goods/services, the right vendor, and the right fee/cost to be paid. (NOTE: The prescribed process is based on State laws, published AHCCCS/RSA fee schedules, and VR policies. The process varies from service to service depending on policies, the estimated costs of the goods or services, and on whether contracts currently exist or not.)
- ★ Authorizations are usually made directly to a vendor, or provider of goods or services.
- ★ There are three different scenarios in which you receive a State warrant made out in your name. These scenarios allow you to authorize and to be the actual buyer of goods and services:
  - A payment warrant is made out to you based on the terms of your IPE, your participation in services, and on monthly contacts with your counselor;
  - A “Voucher Agreement” is signed by you and you are then given the money (warrant) to buy the service described in the Voucher

- Agreement;
- You receive payment, in your name, for costs that you incurred in accordance with the terms of your IPE. The amount of payment is based on an invoice from the provider of the service that you provide the counselor as documentation.

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## **CAN I GET MEDICAL OR PSYCHOLOGICAL HELP THROUGH THE VR PROGRAM?**

RSA provides non-emergency medical or psychological services necessary to prepare you for getting a job.

The VR program is not a medical care provider and does not provide or pay for ongoing medical or psychological care.

The VR Program is never used for medical emergencies.

**Under what circumstances can the VR program provide medical or psychological services?**

All of the following must apply:

- ★ You must be eligible for VR services.
- ★ You must have an approved IPE.
- ★ You must have selected a job goal.
- ★ The disability must be chronic and stable (or slowly progressive).
- ★ Services must be able to correct the problem, to reduce the impact of the problem, or to get around the problem so that you can go to work within "a reasonable period" of time.

(NOTE: A reasonable period is determined individually but should take into consideration factors such as the nature of the disability, prognosis with respect to life expectancy, age, and employment potential.)

**What services are we talking about exactly?**

The services we are talking about include:

- ★ Corrective surgery or therapeutic treatment;
- ★ Diagnosis of and treatment for mental or emotional disorders;
- ★ Dentistry;
- ★ Drugs and supplies associated with services;
- ★ Prosthetic, orthotic, or other adaptive aids and devices, including hearing aids;
- ★ Eyeglasses, visual training, and the examination and services necessary for the prescription and provision of eyeglasses, contact lenses, microscopic lenses, telescopic lenses, and other special visual aids;
- ★ Podiatry;

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- ★ Physical therapy;
- ★ Occupational therapy;
- ★ Speech or hearing therapy;
- ★ Mental health services; and
- ★ Other medical or medically related rehabilitation services (including Services of Native healing practitioners who are recognized as such by an Indian Tribe and are providing services for a disabled Native American) and other medical and social work support services.

#### **Who pays for these services?**

VR pays for these services with the following restrictions:

- ★ Your family income must be reviewed. VR pays only if the review shows that you have “economic need”.
- ★ Availability of medical/health insurance, AHCCCS, ALTCS, Workers Compensation, Medicare must be fully investigated. These must be used to pay for the service if available.
- ★ Individuals with serious mental illnesses who are eligible for care through their Regional Behavioral Health Authority's network of services will not receive mental health services (psychological assessments, psycho-therapy, psychiatric care) paid for by VR but must use the services available through the mental health system.

NOTE: The VR program can only pay medical treatment costs of acute or chronic medical complications and emergencies which are associated with, or arise out of, provision of physical and/or mental restoration services or which are inherent in the condition under treatment, when the success of the IPE is directly jeopardized and insurance, AHCCCS or other comparable benefits are not available.

#### **Do I get to choose my own doctor, psychologist, dentist, etc.?**

You can choose your own doctor, psychologist, dentist, etc. as long as: (i.) the provider meets provider qualifications; (ii.) the provider agrees to provide the service within existing RSA fee schedules; and (iii.) the provider is willing to work with you and the counselor to set specific objectives.

#### ***What are the required provider qualifications?***

- Treatment of diagnosed physical or mental conditions can only be provided by individuals qualified by state licensing/certification laws for the services they are expected to provide.

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- Restorative aids such as eyeglasses, microscopic or telescopic lenses, therapeutic contact lenses, or other low vision aids, etc. are bought only from qualified providers in accordance with the assessment recommendations and appropriate consultation. When options are available (such as tinting or polycarbonate lenses for eye glasses), VR will only pay for what is medically or vocationally necessary.
- Provision of restorative services such as visual training, surgeries, etc. may be provided as prescribed by a licensed physician skilled in the diseases of the eye, an optometrist, or technician whichever is recommended in the assessment report and is consistent with consultant recommendations.

***Does the provider honor the RSA or AHCCCS Fee schedule?***

RSA will honor your choice of a provider if the provider works within RSA's and AHCCCS' fee schedule. If your provider does not honor RSA's or AHCCCS' fee schedule, the counselor will recommend another provider to you.

RSA will honor your choice for a more expensive doctor only if you are willing to pay the difference in the fee. If the choice involves additional travel, per diem, or other assessment related costs, your choice will be honored if you are willing to pay those additional expenses as well.

***Will services help me to achieve set objectives?***

Decisions to continue medical or psychological services is based on achieving measurable and agreed upon treatment objectives. These treatment objectives are listed as intermediate objectives in the IPE.

**Required Consultation**

The counselor has to get medical or psychological consultation before he/she can authorize medical or psychological services except for:

- Stock low vision aides,
- Standard glasses,
- Dental examination and/or treatment costing \$850 or less.

**Additional information regarding Eye services for clients who are blind or experience visual problems**

- ★ Eye restoration services are provided only if the condition under treatment is stable or slowly progressive.
- ★ Conditions that **do** meet the criteria for being “stable/slowly progressive”, or physical restoration services which may be provided based on the existence of such conditions, include:
  - Low vision aids;
  - Correction of vision;
  - Glaucoma procedures;
  - Cataract surgeries;
  - Corneal transplants;
  - Treatment of chronic vitreous hemorrhaging from proliferative diabetic retinopathy after the first 60 days;
  - Cosmetic eye problems severe enough to cause social rejection.

Conditions which **don’t** meet the criteria for being “stable/slowly progressive” are temporary conditions, emergency services, or medical care services. They include:

- Medical Glaucoma treatment;
  - Acute intra-ocular bleeding in the eye: e.g., diabetic vitreous hemorrhage) less than 60 days old;
  - Acute retinal detachment;
  - Medical care for diabetes;
  - Acute infection or inflammation of the eye;
  - Cosmetic refractive surgery (e.g., RK).
- ★ A surgery may be performed on one eye when the other eye is good only when the job goal and/or achievement of IPE goals and objectives require use of both eyes;
- ★ A surgery may be performed that won’t improve current vision but will reduce future vision loss.
- ★ Contact lenses are purchased only when needed for therapeutic reasons which are work related.

- ★ Surgery will only be done if the client is able to provide for the necessary medical management or maintenance afterwards.
- ★ When aids and devices (including low-vision aids) are to be provided, the client should consider trial use, training, refitting, and follow up checks as part of the plan. These may be included as part of buying an aid or device or bought separately.

**Additional information regarding Dental services**

- ★ No restoration of natural teeth, or implants, past the second bicuspid (including fillings, crowns, and endodontics) will be authorized.
- ★ Dental services are restricted to deal with situations which directly prevent employment. These situations include:
  - Serious cosmetic impediment,
  - Serious chronic pain.
- ★ Gold inlays will not be authorized.
- ★ Fixed bridges will not be authorized, except in unusual circumstances, and then only for front teeth.
- ★ Partial dentures will not be authorized unless they replace one or more front teeth and/or replace at least four back teeth on one side of the arch and one on the other side of the arch.
- ★ Counselors must get a review by an RSA Dental Consultant for any planned expenditures over \$850.00. He/she will review to determine if the services are appropriate and necessary.

**Additional information regarding Organ transplants:**

- ★ The Agency will participate in the costs of medical or surgical treatment associated with corneal and/or kidney transplants only.
- ★ Special services may be provided for the treatment of individuals suffering from end stage renal disease (including transplantation and dialysis), artificial kidneys, and supplies necessary for the treatment.
- ★ All insurance benefits, medicare, and AHCCCS benefits must be explored and used, when available.

### **Experimental, high risk, or controversial procedures**

Experimental, high risk, or controversial procedures require RSA administrative approval.

### **Restorative services for transsexuals**

Services for individuals who are transsexuals are provided only if the condition is well documented by a specialist in the field of sexual disorders and when the available information documents that VR services are necessary to achieve an employment outcome:

- ★ Services for transsexuals are restricted to the following:
  - hair removal,
  - hormonal treatments,
  - counseling,
  - adjustment services,
  - speech therapy;
  
- ★ Sex change surgery is not sponsored with VR funds.

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## **CAN I GET HELP FROM VR TO GET A COMPUTER? CAN I GET SPECIALIZED COMPUTER HARDWARE AND SOFTWARE WHICH WILL HELP ME WITH MY DISABILITY?**

The VR program makes a distinction between buying a basic computer and buying specialized computer hardware and software whose purpose is to accommodate for a disability. The distinction is important because different policies apply.

### **Under what circumstances am I eligible to receive a computer from the VR program?**

There are several situations in which having a computer may be important. In each case the purchase of a computer must be part of an IPE (an individualized plan for employment) and you must have been determined to have "economic need" before a computer can be provided by the VR program:

- ★ While you are in school and use of a computer is required for school success. Eligibility requirements include:
  - You are required by the school to use a computer;
  - There is no computer lab available at school, in your dorm, in your local library, at the disabled students center, or at home;
  - Available computers do not meet your needs because of your disability;
- ★ You need a computer to compensate for a disability in order to participate successfully in school, in living independently, etc. Eligibility requirements are based on:
  - Need for augmentative communication;
  - Need for alternative mode of communication;
  - Need to do home study (long distance learning) because of disability (NOTE: physical attendance at school is always preferred to home study which is reserved only when there are no alternatives);
- ★ You need a computer to be self-employed or for jobs in which the employer requires the worker to have his own computer). Eligibility requirements include:
  - An approved business plan is part of your IPE and the IPE includes agreement by VR to purchase a computer;
  - The employer would not normally provide a computer or be responsible for adaptations to a computer and the computer will be

owned by you, not the employer.

**What is included when we talk about “specialized computer hardware and software”?**

All of the following are included when dealing with specialized computer hardware and software (“assistive technology”):

- ★ The evaluation of your needs, including a functional evaluation of you in your customary environment;
- ★ Buying, leasing, or otherwise providing the specialized equipment, internal modifications to an existing computer (such as extra memory chips, video cards, etc.), and all the cords to connect them. Examples include:
  - Optical character recognition systems and scanners,
  - Refreshable Braille display,
  - Screen magnification software,
  - Computer voice output systems, Screen readers,
  - Computer voice input systems,
  - Electronic note takers and notebook computers,
  - Specialized or adapted keyboards, and
  - Special computer monitors.
- ★ Inspection of the equipment to see that it is complete, that it works and that it was shipped as ordered.
- ★ Installation of access equipment and software and/or assistance to work site technical support personnel to ensure proper setup.
- ★ Follow-up, involving a visit(s) to make sure the set up is working and to make modifications.
- ★ Selecting, designing, fitting, customizing, adapting, applying, maintaining, repairing, or replacing assistive technology devices;
- ★ Coordinating and using other therapies, interventions, or services with assistive technology devices, such as physical/occupational therapy;
- ★ Training or technical assistance for an individual with a disability or, if appropriate, the family members, guardians, advocates, or authorized representatives of the individual. Technology Training is provided to ensure that an individual learns how to use assistive devices which have been

provided to him/her and can therefore achieve the maximum benefit from the use of assistive technology.

When training is not provided as part of the purchase or when additional training is needed it may be provided by the vendor from whom the devices were purchased, or may be purchased separately; and

- ★ Training or technical assistance for professionals, employers, others who provide services, or anyone else who is substantially involved in your life, to the extent that such services are necessary for you to achieve your employment goal.
- ★ Technology follow-up provided to provide you short term training with the adaptations, to evaluate the effectiveness of the adaptations, and to determine if your assistive technology goals have been achieved.

The **basic computer is not included or considered specialized adaptive equipment unless** (all three conditions apply):

- You do not already have a computer, and
- The primary need for the computer is to accommodate for your disability, and
- It makes sense to buy an integrated system (sometimes referred to as a “turn key” system).

The law defines **Rehabilitation technology** as “the systematic application of technologies, engineering methodologies, or scientific principles to meet the needs of, and address the barriers confronted by, individuals with disabilities in areas that include education, rehabilitation, employment, transportation, independent living, and recreation. The term includes rehabilitation engineering, assistive technology devices, and assistive technology services.”

Specialized computer hardware and software is included under assistive technology devices and assistive technology services.

**What makes me eligible to receive specialized computer hardware and software?**

- ★ You must be eligible for the VR Program.
- ★ You must need a computer (see above);

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- ★ Your use of the computer depends on the adaptations.
- ★ Adaptations to a computer (or an adapted computer system) are provided only for computers that are portable, are not specifically designed to a specific employer's work station, and could be used in other jobs. The reasons for these rules are that: (1) the Americans with Disabilities require employers to make reasonable accommodations; (2) the RSA cannot adapt employer's computers.

NOTE: The RSA will sometimes pay for computer adaptations for an employer's location to create adapted work station(s) which will benefit more than one client. This has to be worked out between your counselor and the employer,

- ★ The VR program does not:
  - pay for computer adaptations if there are other resources available (AHCCCS/ALTCS, Veterans Administration, insurance, etc. are important comparable benefits to pay for medically needed technology related services and should be explored and used); and
  - provide rehabilitation technology services only to meet another agency or employer's ADA requirements for reasonable accommodations.

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## **CAN I GET HELP FROM VR TO GET REHABILITATION TECHNOLOGY SERVICES (OTHER THAN COMPUTERS OR COMPUTER RELATED EQUIPMENT)?**

### **What is “Rehabilitation Technology”?**

The phrase “rehabilitation technology” is a general word. It includes computer technology, home and vehicle modifications, assisted living aids/devices, environmental controls, etc. Basically, rehabilitation technology means the use of science to design, develop, adapt, test, evaluate, and apply solutions to the problems you face in any area of your life.

**Rehabilitation technology** means the systematic application of technologies, engineering methodologies, or scientific principles to meet the needs of, and address the barriers confronted by, individuals with disabilities in areas that include education, rehabilitation, employment, transportation, and integration into the community. The phrase includes rehabilitation engineering, assistive technology devices, and assistive technology services.

### **What kinds of rehabilitation technology are there, besides the technology related to computers?**

Some examples include:

- ★ Job Site modification to remove the barriers you experience at work.
- ★ Home repair or adaptation to remove the barriers you experience within the home. This can include installation of adaptive/assistive devices as well as minor structural modifications.
- ★ Modification of vehicles or installation of controls to help you drive a car or to be a passenger in a car driven by others
- ★ Specialized driving instruction, if you use adaptive driving aids and devices, to help you prepare and to qualify for a driver’s license.

### **Am I eligible for these services?**

You are eligible for these services:

- ★ If you are eligible for VR services;
- ★ If your need for them relates directly to your ability to get or keep a job.

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- ★ The VR program may provide these services if they are essential for you to complete a program of services. Since the purpose of any service is to help you get or keep a job, the VR program will look for alternative ways to accommodate you during a training program until you are ready to go to work.

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## **CAN THE VR PROGRAM HELP ME WITH MY TRANSPORTATION NEEDS TO GO TO WORK?**

Yes! The VR program cannot pay for ongoing transportation costs once you are employed, but the VR program can help you to develop transportation options that are available to you once you are successfully working.

### **What services can the VR program provide me to help with job related transportation?**

Access to transportation is one of the major reasons persons with disabilities are not employed. The VR program provides for various options to assist you. They include:

- ★ Modifying your car or van for use when you are employed;
- ★ Repairing your current vehicle;
- ★ Training you to find and use alternate means of transportation such as the bus system, special transportation services for persons with disabilities, specially funded transportation programs, etc.

### **Are there any special rules to get these services?**

Yes! Some of the rules are:

- ★ The VR program cannot provide ongoing transportation support after you have completed your rehabilitation program.
- ★ The VR program does not buy vehicles.
- ★ Modifications to vehicles are limited to making only the essential disability related changes that have to be made to your existing vehicle.
- ★ The VR program will not pay for routine automobile maintenance.
- ★ The VR program will not pay more than a total of \$2,000 in auto repairs.
- ★ You must obtain three written quotes for auto repairs costing \$1,000 or more.
- ★ You must contribute 20% of the cost after the first repair.

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- ★ Help in making vehicle repairs is only done as the very last option. The VR program will not repair vehicles which have a history of breaking down and will probably keep breaking down after a repair.

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## **WILL VR SPONSOR ME FOR SCHOOL? AND WHAT ARE THE RULES FOR CHOOSING A SCHOOL?**

### **Will the VR Program help me to go to school?**

VR services, including training, are available to equalize the playing field for persons with disabilities; i.e. to overcome the effects of disability in preparing for, getting, or keeping a job.

The VR program is **not** an educational grant program. There has to be a reason for VR to sponsor you to go to school. That reason has to be related to your disability and to your job goal.

Training or education is available to you if you are eligible for the VR program and you lack the skills, education, certificate, or degree which is necessary to get and perform the job which you and the counselor picked as your employment goal.

### **What if I am, or have been, successfully employed?**

If you are, or have been, successfully employed (that is, in a job which is consistent with your abilities and capabilities) and you can still do that job or a similar job, then the services you will receive from the VR program are those which will help you to keep your present job or to prepare you for another job in the same area of work.

### **ANOTHER WAY TO TALK ABOUT THIS:**

If you are currently employed or have a significant job history, training or educational services are available to you if:

- a). There exists a disability related need for you to change your field of employment or to upgrade skills within your usual or customary job area in order for you to get or keep a job; OR
- b). Your current, or former, job(s) provided only a marginal income, was not steady or was not suitable for you because of your disability; AND
- c). Other VR services alone (such as: direct job placement, on-the-job training, counseling, restoration, job modification, rehabilitation technology) are not enough for you to reach your job goal. In other words, you cannot reach the agreed on job goal without training or education.

### **What kinds of educational programs are available?**

The RSA will support only the amount or level of education or training that is necessary for you to achieve your employment goal: for example, a degree program will be sponsored by VR only when a degree (rather than a certificate) is necessary to achieve the agreed on job goal.

The following kinds of training/education programs are available through the VR program:

#### ***Basic Education-***

This is instruction in educational areas necessary for you to function effectively in every day life. It includes: English as a second language, GED preparation, learning how to read, remedial education and tutoring.

#### ***Post-Secondary Education-***

This is education, after high school, which leads to an academic degree. Such education is provided by junior colleges, colleges, universities, private schools, etc.

#### ***Business/Vocational/Technical education-***

Business/Vocational/Technical Education is classroom instruction and/or skills training in technical, business and other vocational areas not part of an educational degree program (whether the instruction is provided in a public college or university or in private business/vocational schools). Training may be provided in a classroom or in actual job settings.

#### ***Job Training-***

Job training means training in specific skill areas provided by Community Rehabilitation Programs under contract with RSA.

### **If I do go to school, how is my education paid for?**

- VR will pay your tuition costs, regardless of your family income, unless educational grants are available.
- RSA has established a maximum amount of time and \$ that it will support pre-college work, associate degree programs, and baccalaureate programs (see below).
- VR payment of educational costs such as books and supplies depends on income. If you meet economic need, the VR program will pay for required books and supplies identified on a course syllabus and up to \$50 per

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semester/session for other required materials (paper, pens, notebooks, etc.).

- You must apply for a Pell Grant and provide documentation (a statement from the school's financial aid officer or a signed copy of your application) before your counselor can authorize tuition and other educational costs.
- You have to provide documentation that a Pell Grant application has been denied before RSA will authorize payment of a second semester or any months beyond the first five.
- If you have defaulted on school loans, you must have a current payment plan in place, using your own resources, or have had repayment requirements waived before VR can financially support an education plan.
- You are expected to apply for work-study programs to help defray the cost of your education. You need to talk with your counselor to see whether this requirement applies to you.
- If VR is supporting your education program, schools cannot negotiate with you for payment or ask you to sign a separate agreement or contract. Instead, the VR counselor involves you and the school in writing up the terms of the agreement in the authorization to the school and in your IPE.
- The RSA is not responsible for any agreement you enter into with the school on your own. If you already signed an agreement before VR involvement, you need to terminate it immediately once VR picks up sponsorship.

In some instances you are required to help pay for some of the tuition and/or other educational costs from your own personal resources, as follows:

- ★ The difference between “out-of-state” and “in-state” state tuition costs in order to attend an Arizona school as an out-of-state student;
- ★ The difference in the total educational costs between an education/training program which meets your needs and a more expensive educational program that you prefer to attend (for example: **a private college, a private voc/tech school, an out-of-state school**)
- ★ Educational accommodations such as interpreters, readers, note taker, etc. at a private school. (RSA shares the cost of accommodations with public schools in

accordance with intergovernmental agreements.)

- ★ Any costs above the maximums that RSA has set.

The maximum supports that VR provides are:

### **Pre-College**

- A maximum of 24 community college credit hours needed to satisfy academic deficiencies or necessary non-credit courses leading to a degree.

### **Associate Degree**

- A maximum of 72 community college credit hours to obtain an Associate degree or certification.

### **Baccalaureate Degree**

- A maximum of eight university semesters, after completion of an Associate Degree, to obtain a baccalaureate degree. (There is an overall limit of six years to earn this degree.)

### **Certificate Programs**

- Non-degree certificate or occupational programs are based on the cost of obtaining such a certificate in a community college.

The **Fee Schedule** limits the amount that VR will pay for a certificate or baccalaureate degree program.

Other considerations:

- VR will pay only after all available Pell Grant monies are used.
- The VR program will not continue to authorize school costs after a client has been placed on academic probation by the school. Academic probation status will need to be removed by the school prior to VR resuming sponsorship.

### **How do I select a training institution/program?**

You and the counselor will select the training institution by answering the following questions, in order:

#### ***1. Does the school and type of program being considered meet employers'***

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***(who are hiring people in my chosen field of employment) requirements or preferences?***

You are expected to investigate, with the help of your VR counselor, what local employers expect when they hire someone in the employment field you have chosen. The type, or amount, of training or education will be based on what employers in the area typically expect/require.

***2. Do the schools under consideration meet RSA provider standards?***

Any program to be sponsored by the VR program must meet accreditation, licensing, certification or other criteria required by law or by policy:

- Basic Education can be purchased from any institution, organization or individual having demonstrated competence and/or credentials to provide basic education services.
- Post-Secondary education can be purchased from any college or university accredited by a national accrediting body or is under the jurisdiction of the Arizona Board of Education, Junior College Board, or the Board of Regents.
- Business/Vocational/Technical training can be purchased from any post-secondary education institution (as described above) or from institutions recognized by the following appropriate licensing boards or accreditation bodies: Arizona State Barber Board of Examiners; Arizona State Board of Cosmetology; State Board for Private Post-Secondary Education; Accrediting Commission of the National Home Study Council.
- Job Training may be purchased from Community Rehabilitation Program providers and/or other organizations under contract(s) with RSA to provide a specified job training program(s).

***3. Does the school/institution prepare me with/for the right skill, certificate, degree, license?***

- If your job goal requires you to: have a specific skill, complete specific classes, be certified or licensed, complete a course of study to meet a specific licensing requirement, or have an academic degree (AA, BA/BS, etc.) - does the institution offer that skill, those classes, that certificate, that license, or the required degree?

***4. Does the school/institution meet my disability related needs?***

Disability factors may limit the schools you can attend, for example:

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- Do the programs that are offered require you to take unnecessary courses that you can't be successful in because of your disability?
- Are the classes physically accessible?
- Does the school provide necessary support services:
  - ✓ Are reader/interpreter services available?
  - ✓ Are the computer labs accessible?
  - ✓ Does the school provide tutoring supports, etc.?
- Does my disability cause transportation problems that limit the schools I can attend?

**5. *Does the type of educational program/school meet my economic requirements?***

Both the VR program, and you, have to consider the economic ramifications of selecting a school program. In addition, if you are a TANF recipient, the length of time you spend in a training program may become a critical factor.

VR cost effectiveness policies require that:

- If you are potentially eligible for educational grants (e.g. Pell Grant), the school to be selected must qualify for and make available such grants;
- Use of Community College training must be considered first, both as an introduction to a four year college degree program and as an alternative to private technical, business, or other vocational schools because of cost considerations.
- Training or education will be purchased only from Arizona (in-State) schools (ask the counselor for policies about out-of-state schools).

Your family's financial concerns may determine what school or school programs you select, as follows:

- If you are a TANF recipient, you may have to use a short training program to avoid losing TANF;
- If you have family responsibilities (support of spouse, children, etc.), you may chose a shorter, more concentrated, training program rather than a

longer publicly supported program to help you can go to work in less time.

You may select more costly educational alternatives, if you agree to pay the difference in costs from your own resources.

You and the counselor must agree on what educational costs you will pay for to make up the difference. The IPE must clearly document who is responsible for what costs.

**How are the costs of an educational program determined?**

Educational program costs are determined by totaling the following over the length of the entire program:

- ★ Cost of tuition, books, supplies;
- ★ Costs of support services including reader, interpreter and personal assistance services;
- ★ Increased cost of housing (if policies for this service permit);
- ★ Daily transportation costs (if policies for this service permit);
- ★ Increased costs of food, clothing, shelter, daily living expenses (laundry, telephone, etc.) (if policies for this service permit);
- ★ Costs of 2 round trips per school year if living in a dorm or 1 round trip if living in an apartment; and
- ★ Deductions from costs, such as:
  - Amount of student financial aid assistance made available;
  - Amount of the increase in SSI payments for someone not living at home;
  - Amount of other comparable benefits, i.e. ICA sponsored training that are available;
  - Amount of Work Study income.

**NOTE: The Vocational Rehabilitation program never pays normal ongoing living expenses.**

The VR counselor will work with you to develop procedures to assist in planning and monitoring your educational program. Please read the following “IF THE VR

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## PROGRAM SPONSORS ME FOR SCHOOL, WHAT ARE THE RULES?”

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## IF THE VR PROGRAM SPONSORS ME FOR SCHOOL, WHAT ARE THE RULES?

The counselor may ask you to read the following rules and to acknowledge in writing that you: have read them, understand them, and plan to abide by them when planning your IPE. Many of these rules are also on the form *Post Secondary Education Plan of Study* which also contains a place for signatures.

### ***Plan of study (course selection, number of hours, etc.)***

You are normally expected to enroll as a full time student. You are responsible to make sure that the time and costs of his/her educational program stay within the maximum allowable times/costs.

The counselor will have you complete a separate form (*Plan of Study*) to attach to your individualized plan for employment (IPE). You are expected to adhere to commitments contained in your IPE and your *Plan of Study*. Specifically:

- ★ You are required to discuss any changes to your schedule and decisions to drop classes with your counselor before you make them.
- ★ You are required to submit monthly reports to you counselor. The reports must indicate progress, problems you are having, any non-attendance, etc. Monthly payments for support services such as transportation and other supports will not be issued without a report from you.
- ★ For a student who goes on academic probation:
  - VR will not pay for next semester's tuition;
  - Payment of any residential or other living costs stop for the months following being placed on academic probation;
  - These restrictions remain in place until academic probation has been lifted.
- ★ Changes in courses or courses dropped may result in a change in school completion date. VR will not continue to sponsor your education costs (tuition or supports) beyond the agreed upon completion date unless you have consulted with the counselor and changes to your program (which result in a change in completion date) have been approved and documented at or before the time these changes occurred.
- ★ At the end of each semester, the counselor needs your transcript to know exactly how many credit hours you have towards your educational goal/degree and how many hours you will still need. Without this information, tuition for the next semester will not be authorized.

## ***Registration***

Register early and submit registration information to your counselor for approval and authorization ASAP (as soon as possible).

## ***Financial Aid***

All clients must apply for PELL Grants. A letter indicating the award or denial of the grant must be in your file before RSA can authorize your attendance and enroll you in school. If you have not applied, do so. If you have applied, tell your counselor.

Clients must submit the results of the PELL Grant application to the counselor before the next semester or before 6 months have passed. Failure to do so will result in RSA not being able to sponsor you until this information is received.

PELL grant monies must be used to pay the costs of tuition and books first. If there are monies left over they can be used for living expenses. If you receive a PELL Grant check for the time that the VR program has already paid for tuition, books, and supplies **you must reimburse VR for those costs.**

The counselor still needs registration information, including summer school registrations, even if the PELL grant is used to pay for tuition.

If possible for you, you also must apply for work study programs to defray the costs of your education.

## ***Book allowance***

Any charges you incur over the approved amount you will pay yourself, unless you have a signed and dated letter from your counselor stating otherwise.

## ***Book purchasing***

All books must be purchased within the first month of school. Any bills for books purchased more than a month after the semester starts will not be honored for payment.

## ***Transcripts of your grades.***

You must send a copy of your transcript to your counselor at the end of each semester.

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## **WHAT ASSISTANCE WILL VR GIVE ME WHILE I AM IN SCHOOL OR TRAINING?**

**Can VR help me with my living costs while I am going to school?**

Yes and No! VR cannot help you with basic living costs that you had before VR began sponsoring you for school. The VR program can help you with increased costs resulting from being in a program.

**Can VR help me to get back and forth to school, appointments, etc.?**

Yes! VR can help with transportation if your family's income is limited and you are determined to have "economic need".

The rules for doing so include:

- ★ When it is possible and more economical the counselor will bring the service to you;
- ★ You must use transportation that is available free through family, friends, or community organizations, if available;
- ★ The VR program deals with transportation issues as follows:
  - VR will pay the costs of public transportation (including use of special bus rates for the disabled) or for car pooling. Public transportation will be used unless disability related issues prevent its use.
  - VR will authorize reimbursement (or a voucher) to you for using your own transportation (when you have your own transportation) when public transportation is not available or appropriate.
  - The cost of taxis, or other more expensive alternatives, may be provided as a last resort.
  - Other transportation related services such as: permits, parking fees, insurance.
  - VR can pay for your car insurance only if all of the following three conditions exist:
    1. you have no alternatives to driving,
    2. you have no resources to pay his own insurance and
    3. not being able to drive will jeopardize your training program.

Expensive vehicle modifications are done only when you are ready to go to work,

not to support a training program.

**I am deaf, can VR help me with interpreter services?**

Yes! If you attend a public, tax supported educational institution.

No! If you attend a private school.

You must use other resources to pay for, or provide, interpreter services if such are available.

Schools cannot require a student to apply for VR services in order to receive interpreter services or other reasonable accommodations under ADA. If you are a student and do not otherwise need support from the VR program, insist that the school provide you with necessary accommodations.

RSA uses only contract vendors, or the schools themselves, to provide interpreters.

**Does VR help me with attendants (or Personal Assistance Services-PAS)?**

Yes!

- ★ The VR Program will contribute to the cost of PAS services only to the extent necessary to permit you to participate in VR sponsored services (i.e. those included in your Individualized Plan for Employment).
- ★ The VR program requires you to use AHCCCS, insurance, ALTCCS, etc., if available, to pay for PAS.
- ★ The VR Program will provide personal assistance services while you are in travel status as necessary. Besides payment of personal assistance services the counselor may also provide for the attendant's Per Diem expenses if it is necessary that the attendant accompany the client.
- ★ Payments for an attendant may be made either by a pre-approved voucher to you or paid by VR directly to the attendant.
  - When the voucher is paid to you, you must approve and submit the attendant's invoice *Statement of Services Rendered* to your VR counselor for documentation.

- When paying the personal care assistant directly for you, the counselor completes a *Authorization to Provide Goods and Services with the individual personal care assistant* and pays on receipt of *Statement of Services Rendered (VR-012)*.
- Your personal assistant will be reimbursed for a maximum of 54 hours per month for services to you while going to and from school and while you are at school, at the rates set by RSA.
- You may be provided additional personal assistance services if it is needed for waking, dressing, personal care, getting you ready for school, etc., for no more than an additional total of 54 hours per month. The following restrictions apply:
  - i. The VR Program cannot support this level of personal assistance services if a spouse, family member, or friends are available.
  - ii. These Personal assistance services can only be provided during the time period that the client is involved in an IPE.

**Does VR help me by putting educational materials into alternate formats?**

Not normally!

- ★ The VR program relies on the school to provide you information in the format(s) you need.
- ★ The VR program also relies on other programs to provide this service to you at no cost.

**I am blind, will VR provide me with Reader services?**

Reader services means the use of another individual to read written material which is not available from other resources, i.e. talking books, tape recordings, braille.

In general, the VR program relies on schools to provide this service.

- ★ When comparable benefits are not available, VR will pay for this service at an individually negotiated rate.
- ★ The VR program pays for this either using a pre-approved voucher to you or pays the reader directly.
  - When you are provided a voucher directly, you must submit a

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- Statement of Services Rendered* for documentation in the case file.
- When VR pays the reader directly, the counselor completes a *Authorization to Provide Goods and Services* to the individual reader and pays on receipt of *Statement of Services Rendered*.

**Can I receive help with Note-taking services?**

Note-takers are used to transcribe spoken information.

This service is sometimes necessary when you have sensory, neurological, and learning impairments and need someone else to make notes for you. It is not provided by VR unless needed for disability related reasons.

In general, the VR program relies on colleges and universities to make note-taking services available to you without charge.

- ★ VR will pay for this service at an individually negotiated rate either as a pre-approved voucher to the client or directly to the note-taker.
  - When you are provided a voucher directly, you must submit a *Statement of Services Rendered* for documentation in the case file.
  - When paying the note taker directly, the counselor completes a *Authorization to Provide Goods and Services* to the individual note-taker.

**Can VR help me by paying day care costs for my children?**

You must use existing resources that may be available to you before the VR program will consider helping you with daycare while you are in VR sponsored activities. For example, individuals in the TANF/Jobs Welfare to Work program are eligible for child care paid for by the DES Child Care Administration. The VR program will not pay child care for TANF/JOBS clients.

Child care benefits may be available to you from the DES Child Care Administration in other circumstances ("low income working child care" and "special circumstances child care"). Availability for benefits through the Child Care Administration must be investigated and documented.

- ★ The VR program will review your family income and determine that you have "economic need" before it can sponsor day-care.
- ★ DES child care rates for day care are either for partial or full days. In no case

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will rates paid by the VR program exceed the maximum child care reimbursements published by the DES Child Care Administration.

- ★ If a commercial child care agency/operator is used, the agency must meet all applicable state licensing requirements.

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## **CAN I RECEIVE “VOUCHERS” TO PAY FOR MY OWN SERVICES?**

In some circumstances, YES!

### **What are “vouchers”?**

Vouchers are State warrants or checks made out to you. You cash that check and use it to pay for agreed on goods or services. This allows you to select the vendor or store you go to and the specific item you buy.

### **Under what circumstances can I receive “vouchers”?**

Use of “vouchers” is restricted by dollar amount and by the types of goods or services to be purchased, as follows:

- ★ Use of a “voucher” will not be for large amounts.
- ★ “Vouchers” can be an option for some goods or services (ask the counselor for which goods or services this is an option):

### **What are the rules that apply to “vouchers”?**

The rules that apply are:

- ★ Both you and the counselor understand the responsibilities that go along with the use of a “voucher”;
- ★ The amount of the “voucher” made out to you is based on either actual costs or documented cost estimates;
- ★ The service or good to be purchased using the “voucher” is part of an approved IPE (Individualized Plan for Employment);
- ★ Once you have received the check and you are considered to have received the goods or services they represent. The VR program will **no longer** be responsible for those goods or services and will not re-authorize a payment for the same goods or services. The VR Program will also not be responsible for repair or maintenance that would normally be provided with the item, or for quality of the services provided.

### **How do “vouchers” work?**

There are two methods used in the VR program.

**Method one:**

One way is based on a counselor's prior permission for you to incur obligations. The counselor commits the VR program to pay you for pre-approved costs. This works when you don't need to have "cash-in-hand" to receive services. The amount of the check that the counselor will issue you is based on actual receipts you provide for goods or services that have been provided for you.

This method is most often used to pay for:

- ★ Approved Personal Assistant Services (PAS or Attendants), reader/note taker services, etc.
- ★ Approved costs you incur to use your own vehicle for approved travel to and from school, etc.,
- ★ Approved lunch money or extra approved costs incurred while you are at school,
- ★ Approved child care costs.

**Method Two:**

The other way is to issue you a check, up front, to buy approved goods and services. This method is used when you need cash in hand to buy the good or service.

You will sign a "Client Voucher Agreement" before a check is issued. This agreement includes the items that are being authorized, an accurate cost estimate for each item, and your signature which says you understand the obligations associated with receiving the check.

This method is most often used to buy things such as:

- ★ Certificates, licenses, bonds, insurance, etc.,
- ★ Uniforms, work clothes, etc.,
- ★ Initial goods and supplies,
- ★ Tools or equipment,
- ★ Computer software, hardware, etc.

Or to make co-payments.

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## **CAN ELIGIBILITY EVER BE TAKEN AWAY AFTER I HAVE BEEN DECLARED ELIGIBLE?**

Yes, a person who was determined eligible can later become ineligible. This usually happens when experience shows that an individual's ability to benefit from VR services and go to work no longer exists. The counselor will talk with you any time it appears to him/her that you can no longer be expected to achieve an employment outcome. It is hoped that both you and the counselor will come to agreement about when your VR case should be closed because competitive employment no longer appears feasible or possible.

### **Are there other reasons (besides an ineligibility reason) why my case may be closed?**

Yes, there are a number of reasons why your case may be closed other than an ineligibility decision by a VR counselor. They are, as follows:

- ★ You are successfully working and no longer need VR services
- ★ You can no longer continue because of personal or health factors
- ★ You do not respond to attempts to contact you
- ★ You do not let your counselor, or other VR staff, know that you moved or where you moved
- ★ You threaten or are abusive to staff to the extent that an ongoing relationship is no longer possible
- ★ You show by your actions that you no longer want to participate.

### **Can I decide to have my case closed?**

Yes, you can decide that you no longer want to pursue services from the VR program. Some reasons for making this decision are:

- ★ you are not ready to participate in a vocational program;
- ★ you have personal, medical, or other issues to take care of.

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## HOW LONG WILL VR CONTINUE TO HELP ME?

You will continue to receive services as long as you are actively and satisfactorily participating in your program to reach your vocational goal and you continue to need VR services. This includes:

- ★ Services to help you develop an individualized plan for employment (IPE),
- ★ Follow along monitoring and support while you receive services agreed to under an IPE,
- ★ Follow-along services for at least ninety days after planned services have been completed and you are working successfully, and
- ★ Time limited "post employment" rehabilitation services after your case has been successfully closed.

### Under what circumstances will my case be closed?

Specifically, your case will be closed under the following circumstances:

- ★ If you are determined by the counselor not to be eligible for the VR program;
- ★ If you request that your case be closed;
- ★ If it becomes impossible to continue to work with you, because:
  - VR staff can't find you,
  - You don't respond to attempts to contact you,
  - Your actions, behavior or attitude have made it impossible to continue to work with you;
- ★ You request a transfer to another program and no longer need VR services;
- ★ If you are successfully employed and no longer need VR services and:
  - You have maintained suitable employment for at least 90 days,
  - You and your counselor have agreed to the closure of your case.

### Can I re-apply any time I want?

Yes and No!

If your case has been closed because of an ineligibility decision you must wait a year to re-apply unless you can show that something significant has changed that might change your eligibility status.

Otherwise, you can re-apply when necessary or appropriate. However, please remember:

- ★ The VR program only provides “rehabilitation” services. The VR program is not an ongoing resource to: pay for normal living costs, bail you out because you are short of money, pay for debts, repairs to your car or home, etc.
- ★ Eligibility must be re-established anew each time. You are not automatically eligible because you were eligible in the past.

Other than for Post Employment services, re-applying means making a new eligibility decision: i.e. starting the process all over.

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# **EMPLOYMENT**



## **Policies, Procedures, And General Information**

(that consumers should know when they begin work)

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## WHAT IF I CAN WORK BUT WILL ALWAYS NEED HELP TO KEEP A JOB?

RSA does not have enough money to pay for specially supervised work environments, job coaching, or personal care assistance on an ongoing basis to maintain your job after completing a VR program. The VR counselor will help you see who might help pay for this support, such as:

- ★ Social Security Work Incentives to help pay for work expenses;
- ★ The services of employers, friends or family members;
- ★ The assistance from other agencies or programs to provide or pay for these supports.

When the only option is for RSA to pay the costs of long-term employment supports, your name will be put on a waiting list for VR services, even if you are otherwise eligible for the Vocational Rehabilitation Program. When monies to pay for your long term employment supports have been identified you will be contacted to begin a VR program of services.

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## **WILL VR WORK WITH ME AND MY EMPLOYER ONCE I GO TO WORK?**

**Yes!**

### **What can VR do to help make my job fit my disability related needs?**

There are a number of services that the VR counselor can provide to help make sure that your job fits your needs. Examples of what your counselor can do include:

- ★ Provide consultation to the employer who, under ADA, needs to make modifications to the job duties or to make the job site accessible (or, if necessary, provide the service directly);
- ★ Provide you with technology adaptations or other disability related tools that you can use to be successful;
- ★ Do modifications to your van or vehicle so that you can get to work;
- ★ Provide orientation and mobility training services to individuals who are blind and to other individuals who need help with bus travel, directions, etc. to their new job
- ★ Provide training/technical assistance to your supervisor or the employer to help them understand the nature of your disability and how to best accommodate your needs.

### **Can VR ever provide services after my VR case has been closed?**

**Yes!**

VR Program funds cannot be used to pay for ongoing and extended employment support services. You may, however, need a service or two to help you remain employed, such as:

- ★ orientation to a new work situation,
- ★ rehabilitation technology services, or
- ★ help with finding a new job if you have lost your job.

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## **WILL THE VR PROGRAM CLOSE MY CASE AS SOON AS I GET A JOB?**

**No!**

The VR counselor must keep the case open for at least 90 days after you are successfully employed to give you time to adjust and become comfortable with your job.

Even when your case is closed, you should let your counselor know if get into trouble with your job. Sometimes an additional service or two can make the difference in helping you keep the job.

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